

Solution Structure of a Post-transition State Analog of the Phosphotransfer Reaction Between the A and B Cytoplasmic Domains of the Mannitol Transporter Π^{Mannitol} of the *Escherichia coli* Phosphotransferase System*

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Running Title: Solution structure of the IIA^{Mtl} -phospho IIB^{Mtl} complex

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The solution structure of the post-transition state complex between the isolated cytoplasmic A (IIA^{Mtl}) and phosphorylated B (phospho IIB^{Mtl}) domains of the mannitol transporter of the *Escherichia coli* phosphotransferase system has been solved by NMR. The active site His-554 of IIA^{Mtl} was mutated to glutamine to block phosphoryl transfer activity, and the active site Cys-384 of IIB^{Mtl} was substituted by serine to permit the formation of a stable phosphorylated form of IIB^{Mtl} . The two complementary interaction surfaces are predominantly hydrophobic, and two methionines on IIB^{Mtl} , Met-388 and Met-393, serve as anchors by interacting with two deep pockets on the surface of IIA^{Mtl} . With the exception of a salt bridge between the conserved Arg-538 of IIA^{Mtl} and the phosphoryl group of phospho IIB^{Mtl} , electrostatic interactions between the two proteins are limited to the outer edges of the interface, are few in number and appear to be weak. This accounts for the low affinity of the complex ($K_{\text{diss}} \sim 3.7$ mM) which is optimally tuned to the intact biological system in which the A and B domains are expressed as a single polypeptide connected by a flexible 21 residue linker. The phosphoryl transition state can readily be modeled with no change in protein-protein orientation and minimal perturbations in both the backbone immediately adjacent to His-554 and Cys-384 and the side-chains in close proximity to the phosphoryl group. Comparison with the previously solved structure of the IIA^{Mtl} -HPr complex reveals how IIA^{Mtl} uses the same interaction surface to recognize two structurally unrelated proteins, and explains the much higher affinity of IIA^{Mtl} for HPr than IIB^{Mtl} .

signal transduction pathway whereby phosphotransfer via a series of biomolecular steps is coupled to sugar transport across the membrane (1-4). The phosphoryl group originates on phosphoenolpyruvate and the initial transfer steps, involving first enzyme I and subsequently HPr, are common to all components of the pathway. Thereafter the phosphoryl group is transferred to sugar specific enzymes II, of which there are four major classes, glucose (Glc), mannitol (Mtl), mannose (Man) and chitobiose (Chb), which share no sequence similarity to one another (2,3), and with one exception (the B domains of enzymes Π^{Mtl} and Π^{Chb}) no structural similarity to one another either (4-15). Enzymes II generally comprise three domains, two cytoplasmic, A and B, and one transmembrane, C, which may or may not be covalently linked to one another (2-4). The A domain accepts the phosphoryl group from HPr and donates it to the B domain. Subsequently the phosphoryl group is transferred from the B domain to the incoming sugar bound to the C domain. The complexes of the PTS are of considerable interest from the perspective of protein-protein interactions since similar binding surfaces can recognize multiple, structurally different, targets. We have embarked on a long-term structural study of the complexes of the PTS, and to date we have determined the solution NMR structures of the enzyme I(EI)-HPr complex (16), complexes of HPr with IIA^{Glc} (17), IIA^{Mtl} (18) and IIA^{Man} (19), and the complex of IIA^{Glc} with IIB^{Glc} (195). In this paper we present the solution structure of a post-transition state analog of the IIA^{Mtl} - IIB^{Mtl} complex. Specifically, we make use of the active site C384S mutant of IIB^{Mtl} to generate a stably phosphorylated form IIB^{Mtl} (20,21), and the active site H554Q mutant of IIA^{Mtl} to prevent phosphoryl transfer between IIA^{Mtl} and IIB^{Mtl} . (Throughout the text and figures, residues of IIB^{Mtl} are denoted in *italics*.) The complex reveals the structural basis of specific

The bacterial phosphoenolpyruvate:sugar phosphotransferase system (PTS)¹ comprises a fundamental

recognition between IIA^{Mtl} and IIB^{Mtl} and the interactions involved in phosphoryl transfer.

EXPERIMENTAL PROCEDURES

Cloning, Expression, and Purification of IIA^{Mtl}(554Q) and phosphoIIB^{Mtl}(C384S) – The region corresponding to the A domain (IIA^{Mtl}) of the mannitol transporter, residues 490–637, was cloned as described previously (18). From this original construct, the active site histidine residue (His-554) was mutated to a glutamine to disable its phosphoryl transfer activity. The new construct was verified by DNA sequencing, and then subcloned into a modified pET-32a vector (14) to form a thioredoxin fusion protein with a 6-His tag. After transformation with an expression vector, *E. coli* strain BL21(DE3) (Novagen) was grown in either Luria Bertini or minimal media (with ¹⁵NH₄Cl and/or ¹³C₆-glucose as the sole nitrogen or carbon sources, respectively), induced with 1 mM isopropyl-β-D-thiogalactopyranoside at an A₆₀₀ ~ 0.8, and harvested by centrifugation after 4 h of induction. After harvesting, the cell pellet was resuspended in 50 ml (per liter culture) of 50 mM Tris, pH 7.4, 100 mM NaCl, 2 mM β-mercaptoethanol, 10 mM imidazole, and 1 mM phenylmethylsulfonyl fluoride. The suspension was lysed by three passages through a microfluidizer, and centrifuged at 10,000 x g for 20 minutes. The supernatant fraction was loaded onto a nickel-Sepharose column (~20 ml; Amersham Biosciences), and the fusion protein was eluted with a 100-ml gradient of imidazole (25mM to 500 mM). The fusion protein was then dialyzed against 20 mM Tris, pH 8.0, 200 mM NaCl, and 2 mM β-mercaptoethanol, and digested with thrombin (10 NIH units/mg of protein). Thrombin was removed by passage over a benzamidine-Sepharose column (1 ml; Amersham Biosciences) followed by the addition of 1 mM phenylmethylsulfonyl fluoride. The cleaved 6-His-thioredoxin was removed by loading the digested proteins over a nickel-Sepharose column. IIA^{Mtl}(H65Q) was further purified by Sephadex-75 gel filtration column (Amersham Biosciences) equilibrated with 20 mM Tris, pH 7.4, 1 mM EDTA, and 0.01 % (w/v) sodium azide.

The active site mutant of the B domain, IIB^{Mtl}(C384S), of the mannitol transporter (residues 375–476) was cloned, expressed, phosphorylated, and purified as described previously (21).

With the exception of the titration experiments, NMR samples contained 3 mM IIA^{Mtl}(H65Q) and 3mM phosphoIIB^{Mtl}(C384S) in 20 mM tris-d₁₁ (pH 7.4), 0.01% (w/v) sodium azide, and either 90% H₂O/10% D₂O or 99.996% D₂O. Each sample contained complexes of one uniformly ¹⁵N/¹³C-labeled protein

with its unlabeled partner. For titration experiments, 0.6 mM of either protein was titrated with the other protein using up to 1:12 molar ratios in 20 mM tris, pH 7.4, and 0.01% (w/v) sodium azide.

NMR Spectroscopy – NMR spectra were collected at 30°C on Bruker DRX800, DMX750, DMX600, DRX600 and DMX500 spectrometers equipped with either an x,y,z-shielded gradient triple resonance probe or a z-shielded gradient triple resonance cryoprobe. Spectra were processed with the NMRPipe package (22), and analyzed using the program PIPP/CAPP/STAPP (23).

Sequential and side-chain assignments of IIA^{Mtl}(H65Q) and phosphoIIB^{Mtl}(C384S) in a 1:1 mixture were performed using 3D triple resonance through-bond scalar correlation experiments (3D HNCACB, CBCA(CO)NH, HBHA(CBCACO)NH, C(CCO)NH, H(CCO)NH) in conjunction with 3D ¹⁵N-separated, ¹³C-separated, and ¹³C/¹³C separated nuclear Overhauser enhancement (NOE) experiments (24–26). Intermolecular NOEs were recorded with one partner ¹⁵N/¹³C-labeled and the other unlabeled in D₂O using 3D ¹³C-separated/¹²C-filtered NOE experiments (26).

Side-chain torsion angle restraints were derived from ³J_{NC_γ} and ³J_{C_γC_γ} coupling constants measured using quantitative J correlation spectroscopy (27) in conjunction with short mixing time (30 ms) 3D ¹³C-separated NOE spectra recorded in H₂O (26).

Axially stretched (28) neutral polyacrylamide gels (5% w/v polyacrylamide; 39:1 w/w acrylamide/bisacrylamide) were prepared as described previously (21). Residual dipolar couplings (RDC) were obtained by taking the difference in J couplings measured in aligned and isotropic (water) media. ¹J_{NH} couplings were determined from a 2D in-phase/anti-phase ¹H-¹⁵N HSQC spectrum. Measurements on the free proteins were carried out using a protein concentration of 0.5 mM; measurements on the complex were carried out on samples containing 0.5 mM of the ¹⁵N-labeled partner and 2 mM of the unlabeled partner.

Structure Calculations — NOE-derived inter-proton distance restraints were classified into loose approximate distance ranges of 1.8–2.7, 1.8–3.5, 1.8–5.0, and 1.8–6.0 Å corresponding to strong, medium, weak, and very weak NOE cross-peak intensities, respectively; an empirical correction of 0.5 Å was added to the upper distance bounds of distance restraints involving methyl groups to account for the higher apparent intensity of methyl resonances (29). NOEs involving non-stereospecifically assigned methyl, methylene, and aromatic protons were represented by a (Σr⁻⁶)^{-1/6} sum (26). The error range employed for the χ torsion angle restraints (represented by square well potentials) was ±20° when a unique

rotamer could be identified and $\pm 80^\circ$ when the torsion angle could be narrowed down to two of the three rotamers (19).

Structures were calculated using conjoined rigid body/torsion angle-simulated annealing (30) with the program Xplor-NIH (31). The minimized target function comprises the experimental NMR restraints (NOE-derived interproton distances, and torsion angles), a quartic van der Waals repulsion term for the non-bonded contacts (32), a multidimensional torsion angle database potential of mean force (33), and a radius of gyration potential to ensure optimal packing (34).

Structure figures were generated using the programs VMD-XPLOR (35), RIBBONS (36), and GRASP (37). Reweighted atomic probability density maps were calculated as described previously (38).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Equilibrium binding of IIA^{Mtl}(H554Q) and phosphoIIB^{Mtl}(C384S) — The mannitol transporter consists of a single polypeptide comprising three independent domains (C, B and A from N to C-terminus), connected by long flexible linkers (39,40). The linker between the B and A domains is 21 residues and extends from residues 472 to 492 of the full-length protein (10,14). We studied the interaction of constructs comprising the isolated B (residues 371-474) and A domains (490-637) by ^1H - ^{15}N correlation spectroscopy. The combined results from two titration experiments, in which phosphoIIB^{Mtl}(C384S) was titrated into IIA^{Mtl}(H554Q) and vice versa, are displayed in Fig. 1. Exchange between the free proteins and the complex is fast on the chemical shift scale and binding is readily monitored by following the chemical shift perturbation of the ^{15}N -labeled partner upon addition of the unlabeled second protein. The binding of the two proteins is weak and non-linear least squares optimization of all the titration data simultaneously yields an equilibrium dissociation constant, K_{diss} , of 3.7 ± 0.2 mM. Essentially identical results were obtained using the wild type proteins.

Such weak, yet specific binding may at first appear surprising, but is in fact optimally tuned to the intact biological system. The average end-to-end distance of an unstructured 20 residue linker (given by $\sqrt{C_n n l^2}$ where n is the number of residues, C_n the characteristic ratio which has a value of ~ 7 for $n=21$, and l is the average $\text{C}\alpha$ - $\text{C}\alpha$ distance which has a value of 3.8 Å; ref. 41) would be expected to be ~ 46 Å. If one considers one of the domains to be fixed in space, then the effect of the linker is to constrain the second domain to a sphere of average volume 4.1×10^{-22} L which corresponds to an effective concentration of ~ 4

mM. Thus, in the intact protein one would expect the A domain to be bound to the B domain approximately 50% of the time which is perfectly reasonable given that the B domain must use approximately the same interaction surface, centered around the active site cysteine at position 384, to accept the phosphoryl group from the A domain and subsequently transfer the phosphoryl group onto the incoming sugar on the C domain.

It is also worth noting that the intact mannitol transporter is a dimer, with dimerization occurring solely through the transmembrane C domain (42). No homodimeric interactions between A domains or B domains are likely to occur since the isolated A and B domains do not self-associate in free solution, even at high concentrations (in the millimolar range; refs. 14,18). Clearly, phosphoryl transfer between the A and B domains can occur via either intra- or intersubunit interactions between the A and B domains. Mutagenesis and complementation experiments indicate that while phosphoryl transfer can occur via both routes, intrasubunit phosphoryl transfer is dominant (43). The above argument is consistent with the latter experimental observation since the volume in which the A domain would be constrained relative to the B domain would be larger in the context of the inter- than the intra-subunit interaction, and hence the occupancy of the intersubunit IIA^{Mtl}-IIB^{Mtl} complex would be expected to be less than that of the intrasubunit complex.

Structure determination — The solution NMR structures of IIB^{Mtl} (14) and phosphoIIB^{Mtl}(C384S) (21) have been determined previously, and the only structural differences between the phosphorylated and unphosphorylated forms are confined to the active site loop (residues 383-393) and involve a backbone atomic rms shift of only ~ 0.7 Å. Extensive use of residual dipolar couplings (RDC) was made in these structure determinations (14,21), and cross-validation using RDCs in multiple alignment media (21) indicate that the accuracy of the coordinates is high, with cross-validated dipolar coupling R-factors (44) of 14-16% (in phage pfl and neutral polyacrylamide gel) which is equivalent to values expected for 1.5-2 Å resolution crystal structures (21, 45). The crystal structure of IIA^{Mtl} has been determined at 2.0 Å resolution (10). The unit cell in the crystal comprises a dimer of dimers (note that IIA^{Mtl} does not self-associate in solution even at the high concentrations employed by NMR; ref. 18). The structure of the four molecules of IIA^{Mtl} in the unit cell are very similar with an atomic rms difference of 0.3 Å, but four regions (residues 540-543, 555-567, 580-585 and 593-599), comprising loops, exhibit differences between the two pairs of molecules in the unit cell with

maximal backbone atomic displacements in the range 1.5-3 Å. The structure of these loops in solution, both free and bound to HPr, coincides with that found in molecule D of the crystal structure as judged from residual dipolar coupling (RDC) analysis, and these 4 regions were refined independently using RDCs in two alignment media in the solution structure determination of the IIA^{Mtl}-HPr complex (18). RDCs measured in neutral polyacrylamide gel on free IIA^{Mtl}(H554Q) are in excellent agreement with the coordinates of IIA^{Mtl} in the IIA^{Mtl}-HPr complex (18) with a dipolar coupling R-factor of 17%, a correlation coefficient of 0.98, and no deviations above average for the RDCs in the region of the mutation, indicating that the structure remains unaltered within coordinate errors (45,46). Since the chemical shift perturbations for both proteins upon formation of the IIA^{Mtl}(H554Q)-phosphoIIB^{Mtl}(C384S) complex are very small, the largest being less than 0.3 ppm in ¹H (for Asp-454 of IIB^{Mtl}) and 1 ppm in ¹⁵N (for Leu-611 of IIA^{Mtl}), we conclude that the backbone of both IIA^{Mtl}(H554Q) and phosphoIIB^{Mtl}(C384S) remains essentially unchanged upon complex formation. Consequently, the structure determination was carried out using conjoined rigid body/torsion angle dynamics (28) based on the coordinates of free phosphoIIB^{Mtl}(C384S) (ref. 21; PDB accession code 1VRV) and the coordinates of IIA^{Mtl} in the IIA^{Mtl}-HPr complex (ref. 18; PDB accession code 1J6T). The coordinates of the backbone and non-interfacial side-chains were held fixed and rigid body docking with full torsional degrees of freedom for the interfacial side-chains was driven by interproton distance restraints derived from intermolecular NOE data coupled with torsion angle restraints derived from both heteronuclear coupling constant and short mixing time NOE data. Examples of the quality of the intermolecular NOE data obtained from 3D ¹³C-separated/¹²C-filtered NOE experiments that provide exclusively intermolecular NOEs from protons attached to ¹³C on the ¹³C-labeled protein to protons attached to ¹²C on the unlabeled protein, are shown in Fig. 2. A summary of the structural statistics is given in Table I, a superposition of the backbone of the final 270 simulated annealing structures is shown in Fig. 3A and an atomic density probability map representation of some interfacial side-chains is depicted in Fig. 3B.

The NMR experiments were carried out on samples comprising a 1:1 mixture of the proteins, each at a concentration of 3 mM. Under these conditions, only 30% of each protein is in the complex. That is, the concentration of the complex in the sample is ~ 1 mM. This does not affect the observation of intermolecular NOEs. However, it does impede the use of RDCs to provide accurate and reliable information on the relative

orientation of the two proteins in the complex. Since the observed RDCs in a fast exchanging system are a weighted average of the RDCs for the free and complexed protein, one could in principal back-calculate the RDCs for the pure complex on the basis of experimental RDCs measured on the free proteins and the mixture of the two proteins (19, 47). However, this requires very accurate RDC measurements under near-identical alignment conditions, as well as accurate knowledge of the fraction of bound protein. Moreover, in a mixture of labeled and unlabeled partners, the fraction of the labeled partner (on which the RDCs are measured in the mixture) should typically exceed ~30% to ensure that the complex makes a significant contribution to the observed RDCs. Because, in this instance, the two proteins bind so weakly to one another, relatively high concentrations of the unlabeled partner (>2 mM) are required. Despite attempts using a variety of alignment media, we were not able to find experimental conditions that permitted reliable back-calculation of the RDCs owing to either differential interaction of one of the partners with the alignment medium or differential perturbation of the alignment tensor by the unlabeled partner arising from molecular crowding at these protein concentrations.

Overall structure of the complex — Ribbon diagrams providing an overall view of the complex are shown in Fig. 4. The Cα-Cα separation between the last ordered residue at the C-terminus of phosphoIIB^{Mtl} (residue 471) and the first ordered residue of IIA^{Mtl} (residue 493) is 38 Å, a distance that can readily be accommodated by the flexible 21-residue linker. The interaction surface on IIA^{Mtl} comprises 27 residues involving three segments of polypeptide chain: residues 538 to 557 include the C-terminal end of helix α2, a small antiparallel β-sheet formed by strands β2 and β3 connected by a hairpin turn, and the active site residue at position 554; residues 480 to 585 comprise a loop connecting strands β4 and β5; and residues 598 to 612 encompass helix α3 (residues 600-610). The interaction surface on IIB^{Mtl} is made up of 18 residues located in four segments of polypeptide chain: residues 384-400 include the active site loop (residues 384-389) and most of helix α1 (residues 390-404); residue 414 is the C-terminal residue of strand β2; residues 430-433 make up the first turn of helix α2; and residues 451-453 are located in the loop connecting strand β4 and helix α3. The residues comprising the interaction surface of IIB^{Mtl} are highly conserved throughout gram positive and gram negative bacteria (48): 14 out of 18 residues are conserved absolutely; two are subject to highly conservative changes and preserve the functional group (*Arg*-399 to lysine, *His*-430 to glutamine); and one residue, *Gly*-396, can be substituted conservatively by a

serine. Only *Lys-400* is subject to non-conservative substitutions from lysine in gram negative bacteria to asparagine or aspartate in gram positive bacteria. It is also worth noting that residues 382-394 comprising the complete active site loop and the first turn of helix $\alpha 1$ are conserved throughout.

The interaction surfaces of IIA^{Mtl} and IIB^{Mtl} are approximately circular in shape and comparable in size ($28 \times 27 \text{ \AA}$ for IIA^{Mtl} and $22 \times 27 \text{ \AA}$ for IIB^{Mtl}), and are composed of predominantly hydrophobic residues with 60-65% of the atoms being non-polar. The interaction surface on IIA^{Mtl} is concave while that on IIB^{Mtl} is largely convex, thereby providing overall complementarity of fit. The total accessible surface buried at the interface is 1575 \AA^2 , of which 735 \AA^2 originates from IIA^{Mtl} and 840 \AA^2 from IIB^{Mtl} . The gap volume index (defined as the ratio of gap volume to interface accessible surface area) is 2.7, a value typical of optional complexes, that is to say heterocomplexes where the individual components of the complex can also exit as monomers (49). The predominant intermolecular contacts between secondary structure elements involve a helix-helix interaction between helix $\alpha 3$ of IIA^{Mtl} and helix $\alpha 1$ of IIB^{Mtl} , oriented at an angle of $\sim 60^\circ$.

The IIA^{Mtl} - IIB^{Mtl} interface — A stereoview of the interface is shown in Fig. 5 A, together with selected close-ups in Figs. 5B and 5C, surface representations of the interfaces are given in Fig. 6A, and a schematic summary of the intermolecular contacts is provided in Fig. 7. A virtually complete, horseshoe shaped ring of hydrophobic residues surrounds the active site *phosphoSer-384* of IIB^{Mtl} (Fig. 6A, bottom panel). Several intermolecular interactions are noteworthy. The two methionines on IIB^{Mtl} , *Met-393* and *Met-388*, make extensive hydrophobic contacts to residues in two deep pockets located at the top and bottom halves, respectively, of the IIA^{Mtl} interface (in the views shown in Fig. 5 and 6) that serve to anchor IIB^{Mtl} onto IIA^{Mtl} . The top pocket is formed by *Leu-546*, *Gly-547*, *Glu-548*, *Ile-550*, *Ile-604* and *Thr-608*. The bottom pocket comprises *Arg-538*, the active site residue *Gln-554*, *Val-557*, *His-600* and *Ile-601*. The residues in both pockets are either conserved or substituted conservatively in gram negative and positive bacteria (48). The close contacts between *Met-338* of IIB^{Mtl} and *Arg-538* and *Gln-554* of IIA^{Mtl} serve to position the latter two residues such that the carboxamide of *Gln-554* is directed towards *phosphoSer-384* and the guanidino group of *Arg-538* makes a direct salt bridge with the phosphate group of *phosphoSer-384*. The critical role of *Arg-538* is supported by its conservation throughout gram negative and gram positive bacteria, (48). The negative charge on *Asp-385*, located adjacent

to *phosphoSer-384*, is partially offset by a hydrogen bonding interaction with the hydroxyl group of *Thr-542*. There are also a number of weak complementary electrostatic interactions, asymmetrically situated along the outer edges of the interaction surfaces that facilitate the correct orientation of the two proteins. These include interactions between *Lys-400* and *Asp-612* and *Asn-609*, between *Arg-399* and *Thr-605* and *Asn-609*, between *Asn-451* and *Glu-582* and *Asp-585*, and between *His-430* and *Glu-581*. These electrostatic interactions, however, are likely to be relatively weak since the functional groups are separated by $\geq 4 \text{ \AA}$.

The phosphoryl transition state — The phosphoryl transition state can be readily modeled by substituting *Gln-554* for *His* and *Ser-384* for *Cys*, and minimizing the restrained regularized mean coordinates of the IIA^{Mtl} -*phosphoIIB*^{Mtl} complex subject to geometrical restraints for the His---phosphoryl---Cys transition state in conjunction with the experimental NMR restraints, only allowing the backbone of the active site and immediately adjacent residues (i.e. residues 383-385 of IIA^{Mtl} and 553-555 of IIB^{Mtl}) and the side-chains of the interfacial residues to move (15). The geometric restraints include N---P and S---P bond lengths, a planarity term to ensure that the phosphorus atom lies in the plane of the imidazole ring of *His-554* and the sulfur atom of *Cys-384*, and bond angle terms to enforce trigonal bipyramidal geometry for the phosphoryl group (15). A dissociative transition state complex (N---P and S---P bond lengths given by the sum of the van der Waals radii of the atoms, 3.4 and 3.7 \AA , respectively) can be formed with minimal atomic rms shifts of the backbone in the vicinity of the active site residues ($< 0.2 \text{ \AA}$) and compensatory minor displacements of the side-chains of *Cys-384*, *Met-388*, *Arg-438* and *His-554* to accommodate the change in the position of the phosphoryl group (Fig. 8). An associative transition state complex (N---P and S---P bond lengths of 2.4 and 2.8 \AA) can also be formed but involves slightly larger backbone displacements (0.33 \AA for residues 383-385 and 0.22 \AA for residues 553-555). The transition state thus preserves all the intermolecular interactions seen in the post-transition state analogue, including the neutralization of the phosphate group by the guanidino group of *Arg-438*. However, the hydrogen bonds to the phosphoryl group from the hydroxyl groups of *Ser-390* and *Ser-391* and from the backbone amide of *Ser-390* seen in *phosphoIIB*^{Mtl}(*C384S*) are no longer present in the transition state owing to the shift in the position of the phosphoryl group towards *His-554* of IIA^{Mtl} .

Mechanism of phosphoryl transfer — *In vivo* phosphoryl transfer proceeds from IIA^{Mtl} to IIB^{Mtl} . A proposed mechanism for phosphoryl transfer is shown

in Fig. 9. Modeling phosphoIIA^{Mtl} on the basis of the crystal structure of IIA^{Mtl} (10) suggests that the phosphoryl group, bonded to the Nε2 atom of His-554, accepts three hydrogen bonds: two from the guanidino group of Arg-538 and a potential third from the imidazole ring of His-600 (Nε2 atom) if the χ_1/χ_2 conformation of the latter is changed from g^-/g^- (seen in the IIA^{Mtl}-phosphoIIB^{Mtl} complex) to g^+/g^- . (Note in the crystal structure of IIA^{Mtl} both rotamers are observed; ref. 10). The Nδ1-H atom of His-554 accepts a hydrogen bond from the backbone of Val-452, thereby stabilizing the Nδ1-H tautomeric state. The thiolate state of Cys-384 of IIB^{Mtl} is stabilized by numerous hydrogen bonding interactions within the active site loop (14). Upon formation of the pre-transition state phosphoIIA^{Mtl}-IIB^{Mtl} encounter complex, the hydrogen bond between the imidazole ring of His-600 and the phosphoryl group is broken owing to steric clash with IIB^{Mtl} which precludes the g^+/g^- conformation. Nucleophilic attack at the phosphoryl group by the thiolate of Cys-384 results in the formation of a transition state in which the phosphoryl group accepts two hydrogen bonds from the backbone amide of Met-388 and Gly-389 of IIA^{Mtl} and one hydrogen bond from the guanidino group of Arg-538 of IIA^{Mtl} (Fig. 8). Resolution of the transition state to the post-transition state complex results in further electrostatic interactions in which the phosphoryl group accepts five hydrogen bonds from the active site loop of IIB^{Mtl} (the backbone amides of Met-388, Gly-389, and Ser-391, and the hydroxyl groups of Ser-390 and Ser-391) and one from the guanidino group of Arg-538 of IIA^{Mtl}, and is partially neutralized by the positive helix dipole at the N-terminus of helix α1 of IIB^{Mtl}. Thus, the number of hydrogen bonding/electrostatic interactions involving the phosphoryl group in the post-transition state IIA^{Mtl}-phosphoIIB^{Mtl} complex is larger than in the pre-transition state phosphoIIA^{Mtl}-IIB^{Mtl} complex. In addition, in the transition state more hydrogen bonds to the phosphoryl group originate from IIB^{Mtl} than IIA^{Mtl}. Thus, while phosphoryl transfer between IIA^{Mtl} and IIB^{Mtl} is fully reversible *in vitro*, one would expect the flow of the phosphoryl group from IIA^{Mtl} to IIB^{Mtl} to be favored, in accord with the biological function of the PTS pathway.

Comparison of the interactions of IIB^{Mtl} and HPr with IIA^{Mtl} — A comparison of the IIA^{Mtl}(H554Q)-phosphoIIB^{Mtl}(C384S) and IIA^{Mtl}-HPr (18) complexes is provided in Figs. 6 and 7. Of the 27 residues of IIA^{Mtl} that interact with IIB^{Mtl}, and the 25 that interact with HPr, 23 are shared by the two interfaces (Fig. 7). Thus, IIA^{Mtl} uses essentially the same interaction surface to recognize two structurally different proteins, HPr and IIB^{Mtl}. The shape of the IIB^{Mtl} and HPr interaction

surfaces are similar but bear no similarity to one another in terms of the underlying backbone topology or the orientation of secondary structure elements relative to the IIA^{Mtl} surface (Fig. 6). Indeed, helix α2 of IIA^{Mtl} lies approximately orthogonal to helices 1 and 2 of HPr (cf. top panels of Figs. 6A and B). There are, however, a number of key differences between the interaction surfaces of IIB^{Mtl} and HPr that are noteworthy. First, the number of positively charged residues on the interaction surface of IIB^{Mtl} is half that for HPr (2 compared to 4). Three of the positively charged residues on the HPr interaction surface are involved in electrostatic interactions with negatively charged residues on IIA^{Mtl}, whereas for IIB^{Mtl}, only Lys-400 interacts with a negatively charged residue (Asp-612) on IIA^{Mtl}. This probably accounts for the much lower affinity (about 2 orders of magnitude) of the IIA^{Mtl}-IIB^{Mtl} complex relative to the IIA^{Mtl}-HPr complex (18). Second, the interaction surface on IIB^{Mtl} is significantly more hydrophobic than that on HPr (Fig. 6A and B, bottom panels). Finally, the interaction surface on IIB^{Mtl} includes a negatively charged residue (Asp-385), while there are no negative charges in the case of HPr. The latter is probably important in ensuring that direct interaction and phosphoryl transfer between IIB^{Mtl} and enzyme I, bypassing HPr and IIA^{Mtl}, does not occur: the presence of a negatively charged residue in close proximity to the active site residue in IIB^{Mtl} would lead to unfavorable electrostatic interactions with the interaction surface on EI that contacts HPr (16).

Comparison of the IIA^{Mtl}(H554Q)-phospho-IIB^{Mtl}(C384S) and IIA^{Glc}-IIB^{Glc} complexes — Although the A and B components of enzymes II^{Glc} and II^{Mtl} bear no sequence, secondary structure or topological similarity to one another (2,3,5,6,14,15), the two complexes share a number of features in common, as well as some significant differences. In both cases phosphoryl transfer occurs from a histidine on the A domain to a cysteine on the B domain (2,3). Unlike II^{Mtl}, the A and B domains of II^{Glc} are expressed as separate polypeptides (2,3). The general surface features of the binding interfaces on IIA^{Glc} and IIA^{Mtl} for their target proteins (HPr and the corresponding B domains) are broadly similar in terms of size and shape, each comprising a central hydrophobic region surrounding the active site residue, and an outer ring of charged residues (this paper and ref. 15). However, the IIA^{Glc} interface has a much larger preponderance of negatively charged residues (8 versus 4 for IIA^{Mtl}; cf. ref. 15). The active site loops of IIB^{Glc} and IIB^{Mtl} display similarities in so far that the thiolate state of the active site cysteine is stabilized by hydrogen bonding interactions with backbone amide protons located in the

active site loop, reminiscent of the active site loop of eukaryotic protein tyrosine phosphatases (14,15). However, the structural correspondence with the latter is far more extensive for IIB^{Mtl} (14,21) than IIB^{Glc} (15). The affinity of IIA^{Glc} for IIB^{Glc} (15) is about 2 orders of magnitude higher than that of IIA^{Mtl} for IIB^{Mtl}. From a functional perspective this is fully consistent with the fact that IIA^{Glc} and IIB^{Glc} are expressed as individual proteins (2,3), whereas IIA^{Mtl} and IIB^{Mtl} are expressed as a single polypeptide chain connected by a long flexible linker (3). Examination of the two interfaces, suggests that the difference in affinities can be largely attributed to electrostatic interactions. In the case of the IIA^{Glc}-IIB^{Glc} complex there are six complementary interactions between positively and negatively charged residues (15), while there is only a single such interaction for the IIA^{Mtl}-IIB^{Mtl} complex (Fig. 6A).

Concluding remarks — The structure determination of the IIA^{Mtl}(H554Q)-phospho-IIB^{Mtl}(C384S) complex completes the cytoplasmic complexes of the mannitol branch of the PTS. The structure explains how IIA^{Mtl} uses the same interface to recognize both its upstream, HPr (18), and downstream, IIB^{Mtl} (this paper), interaction partners, although structurally HPr and IIB^{Mtl} are completely dissimilar, and provides a rationalization for the very different affinities of the two complexes. Thus, surface complementarity is largely achieved through hydrophobic interactions, while electrostatic interactions serve to modulate affinity. The orientation of two proteins within a protein-protein complex is clearly determined by the cumulative effect of numerous interactions, each of which makes a small contribution to the overall interaction energy. However, the structures suggest that the two complexes may use different initial determinants to drive the docking of the proteins in the correct configuration. For the IIA^{Mtl}-HPr complex it seems likely that electrostatic interactions between oppositely charged residues, distributed asymmetrically at judicious locations along the outer edge of the interaction surface may play a key role in the initial docking event. Thus a cluster of two positive charges at one edge of the HPr interaction surface (*Lys*-24 and *Lys*-27) complement a cluster of two negative charges on IIA^{Mtl} (Glu591 and Asp585, respectively), while a single charge on the opposite edge of the HPr interaction surface, *Lys*-49, matches a single charge (Asp-612) on IIA^{Mtl} (Figs. 6B and 7). For the IIA^{Mtl}(H554Q)-phospho-IIB^{Mtl}(C384S) complex, on the other hand, the electrostatic interactions are clearly very

weak, and interactions between complementary, localized hydrophobic features of the interaction surfaces may be more important, with the two conserved methionines of IIB^{Mtl} serving as hooks that latch on to the two deep hydrophobic pockets on the surface of IIA^{Mtl} (Figs. 5B, 5C and 6A). Methionine is ideally suited to such a role since its unbranched hydrophobic side-chain can sample extensive configurational space, thereby permitting optimization of its interactions with a target surface. Indeed, extensive use of methionines is employed by calmodulin to recognize many different interaction partners (50). Thus, like other complexes of the PTS, the IIA^{Mtl}(H554Q)-phospho-IIB^{Mtl}(C384S) complex illustrates the versatility of a protein interaction network in which each protein recognizes its upstream and downstream partner using the same interaction surface. Key features of these interactions are complementarity of shape and residue type that can be achieved using a wide array of underlying structural elements; surface side-chain conformational plasticity, particularly involving long side-chains (both hydrophobic and charged), to optimize intermolecular interactions; asymmetric distribution of complementary, intermolecular electrostatic interactions to aid in guiding correct docking; and finally extensive redundancy, thereby ensuring that the overall interaction energy is not dominated by any single interaction but by a multitude of interactions, each contributing only a small proportion of the total interaction energy. The latter is important since, as clearly illustrated by the structures of various protein-protein complexes of this PTS (this paper and refs. 15-19), not every charged residue located in the binding surface of a particular PTS protein need be involved in electrostatic interactions with complementary residues of its diverse interaction partners. While the presence of inherent redundancy does not impact specificity, it will generally result in relatively weak protein-protein interactions. In the case of the PTS, such weak interactions, which are tuned to the micro- to millimolar range, are critical to function which requires rapid dissociation of transient protein-protein complexes to permit efficient phosphoryl transfer down the reaction cascade.

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FOOTNOTES

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¹The abbreviations used are: PTS, phosphoenolpyruvate:sugar phosphotransferase system; enzyme I, EI; HPr, histidine-containing phosphocarrier protein; II^{Mtl}, the mannitol transporter; Mtl, mannitol, Man, mannose; Glc, glucose; Chb, chitobiose; NOE, nuclear Overhauser effect; HSQC, heteronuclear single quantum coherence; rms, root mean square; RDC, residual dipolar coupling.

Figure legends

Fig. 1. Binding of IIA^{Mtl}(H554Q) and phosphoIIB^{Mtl}(C384S). Backbone amide chemical shift perturbations upon titrating unlabeled phosphoIIB^{Mtl}(C384S) into a solution of 0.6 mM ¹⁵N-labeled IIA^{Mtl}(H554Q) are shown by open symbols (and solid lines) and upon titrating unlabeled IIA^{Mtl}(H554Q) into a solution of 0.6 mM phosphoIIB^{Mtl}(C384S) by closed symbols (and dashed lines). The chemical shifts were monitored using ¹H-¹⁵N HSQC spectroscopy at a spectrometer ¹H frequency of 600 MHz. All the curves represent ¹H_N shift perturbations, with the exception of that for Leu-611 where the ¹⁵N shift perturbation is plotted. The lines (both solid and dashed) represent non-linear least squares best-fits to all the titration data simultaneously, using a simple equilibrium binding model. The optimized value of the equilibrium dissociation constant is 3.7±0.2 mM. Residues of phosphoIIB^{Mtl}(C384S) are indicated by *italics*.

Fig. 2. Intermolecular NOEs in the IIA^{Mtl}(H554Q)-phosphoIIB^{Mtl}(C384S) complex. NOEs in a 3D ¹³C-separated(F₂)/¹²C-filtered (F₃) NOE experiment recorded in D₂O are specifically observed from protons attached to ¹³C (in the F₁ dimension) to protons attached to ¹²C (in the F₃ dimension). In *A*, IIA^{Mtl}(H554Q) is ¹⁵N/¹³C labeled and phosphoIIB^{Mtl}(C384S) is unlabeled; in *B*, phosphoIIB^{Mtl}(C384S) is ¹⁵N/¹³C labeled and IIA^{Mtl}(H554Q) is unlabeled. The asterisks denote residual diagonal (auto-correlation) peaks arising from the labeled partner. (Note ¹³C-decoupling is not employed in the F₃ acquisition dimension and hence residual auto-correlation peaks are split into

two components separated by ~ 130 Hz corresponding to the $^1J_{CH}$ coupling; similarly, any incompletely suppressed cross-peaks arising from very high intensity intramolecular NOEs within the labeled partner will also be split by ~ 130 Hz and are therefore easily distinguishable from intermolecular NOEs; ref. 50). Residues of phosphoIIB^{Mtl}(C384S) are labeled in *italics*.

Fig. 3. Solution structure of the IIA^{Mtl}(H554Q)-phosphoIIB^{Mtl}(C384S) complex. *A*, Superposition of the backbone atoms of the final 200 simulated annealing structures. The backbone (N, C α , C atoms) of IIA^{Mtl}(H554Q) is shown in blue and that of phosphoIIB^{Mtl}(C384S) in green. The active site residues, Gln554 and *phospho-Ser384* are shown in red and gold, respectively. *B*, Isosurface of the reweighted atomic density probability map for some interfacial side-chains in the vicinity of the active sites on the two proteins. The isosurface calculated from the ensemble of 200 simulated annealing structures (drawn at a value of 25% maximum) and side-chain coordinates for the restrained regularized mean structure are shown in red for IIA^{Mtl}(H554Q) and in purple for phosphoIIB^{Mtl}(C384S). The relevant portions of the backbone are represented as blue and green tubes for IIA^{Mtl}(H554Q) and phosphoIIB^{Mtl}(C384S), respectively. Residues of phosphoIIB^{Mtl}(C384S) are labeled in *italics*.

Fig. 4. Overall view of the IIA^{Mtl}(H554Q)-phosphoIIB^{Mtl}(C384S) complex. Two approximately orthogonal views of the complex are displayed in a ribbon diagram representation with IIA^{Mtl}(H554Q) in blue and phosphoIIB^{Mtl}(C384S) in green. The side-chains of the two active site residues, Gln-554 and *phosphoSer-384* are depicted in red and gold, respectively. Residues of phosphoIIB^{Mtl}(C384S) are labeled in *italics*.

Fig. 5. The IIA^{Mtl}(H554Q)-phosphoIIB^{Mtl}(C384S) interface. *A*, Overall stereoview of the interface. *B*, Close-up depicting the insertion of Met393 of phosphoIIB^{Mtl}(C384S) into a deep hydrophobic pocket on IIA^{Mtl}(H554Q). *C*, Close-up in the vicinity of the active sites of the two proteins. The color coding for IIA^{Mtl}(H554Q) and phosphoIIB^{Mtl}(C384S) is as follows: backbone (shown as a transparent tubes in *A* and transparent ribbons in *B* and *C*), blue and green, respectively; and side-chain bonds, red and gray, respectively. The side-chain bonds of the two active site residues, Gln-554 and *phosphoSer-384*, are in gold. The side-chain atoms are colored according to atom type; carbon, cyan; nitrogen, blue; oxygen, red; sulphur, yellow; and phosphorus, grey. Residues of phosphoIIB^{Mtl}(C384S) are labeled in *italics*.

Fig. 6. Comparison of the interaction surfaces for the IIA^{Mtl}(H554Q)-phosphoIIB^{Mtl}(C384S) and IIA^{Mtl}-HPr complexes. *A*, IIA^{Mtl}(H554Q)-phosphoIIB^{Mtl}(C384S), and *B*, IIA^{Mtl}-HPr. The top panels display the interaction surface on IIA^{Mtl} for (A) IIB^{Mtl} and (B) HPr; the bottom panels depict the interaction surfaces on (A) IIB^{Mtl} and (B) HPr for IIA^{Mtl}. The surfaces are color coded as follows: hydrophobic residues, green; uncharged residues bearing a polar functional group, cyan; negatively charged residues, red; positively charged residues, blue; active site histidines (or glutamine) (His/Gln-554 for IIA^{Mtl} and His-15 for HPr), purple; active site *phosphoSer-384* of IIB^{Mtl}, yellow. Relevant portions of the backbone and active site residue of the interacting partner are displayed as tubes and bonds, respectively. Also shown in the top panel of (A) are the side chains of Met-388 and Met-383 in gold illustrating how their methyl group point directly into deep hydrophobic pockets on the surface of IIA^{Mtl}. Residues of phosphoIIB^{Mtl}(C384S) and HPr are labeled in *italics*. The coordinates of the IIA^{Mtl}-HPr complex are taken from ref. 18.

Fig. 7. Diagrammatic representation of the intermolecular contacts between IIA^{Mtl} and its partner proteins, IIB^{Mtl} and HPr. Residues of IIB^{Mtl} and HPr involved in electrostatic interactions with a residue on IIA^{Mtl} are colored red. For IIA^{Mtl}, residues that are involved in interactions with both IIB^{Mtl} and HPr are colored green, while residues that only interact with one of the two partner proteins are colored blue. The active site residues, His/Gln-554 of IIA^{Mtl}, *phosphoSer-384* of IIB^{Mtl} and His15 of HPr are colored purple. Residues of phosphoIIB^{Mtl}(C384S) and HPr are labeled in *italics*. The contacts between IIA^{Mtl} and HPr are taken from ref. 18.

Fig. 8. The phosphoryl transition state of the IIA^{Mtl}-IIB^{Mtl} complex. The backbone (tube representation) and side-chain bonds of IIA^{Mtl} are shown in blue and red, respectively; the backbone (tube representation) and side-chain bonds of IIB^{Mtl} are shown in green and gray, respectively. The side-chain bonds of the His-554---P---Ser-384 transition state are shown in gold. Minimal changes in coordinates in the immediate vicinity of the active site residues are required to accommodate the transition state. The coordinates of the post-transition state complex that shift to form the transition state are shown as transparent bonds (side-chains of *phosphoSer-384*, Met-388, Arg-438

and Gln-554; and tubes (backbone of residues 382-384 and 553-555). Residues of phosphoIIB^{Mtl} (C384S) are labeled in *italics*.

Fig. 9. Proposed mechanism of phosphoryl transfer between IIA^{Mtl} and IIB^{Mtl}. The interactions stabilizing the phosphoryl group in phosphoIIA^{Mtl} are modeled based on the crystal structure of IIA^{Mtl} (10). The hydrogen bonding interactions stabilizing the thiolate state of Cys-384 of IIB^{Mtl} are taken from the NMR structure of IB^{Mtl} (14). The hydrogen bonding interactions stabilizing the phosphoryl group in phosphoIIB^{Mtl} are taken from the NMR structure of phosphoIIB^{Mtl} (21). The hydrogen bonding interactions depicted in the post-transition state IIA^{Mtl}-phosphoIIB^{Mtl} complex and the phosphoryl transition state are taken from the present work. Intramolecular and intermolecular hydrogen bonds are depicted by *blue* and *red* dashed lines, respectively.

Table I
Structural statistics

The notation of the NMR structures are as follows: <SA> are the final 270 simulated annealing structures, (SA)_r is the restrained regularized mean structure.

	<SA>	(SA) _r
Number of experimental NMR restraints		
Intermolecular interproton distance restraints	84	
IIA ^{Mtl} intramolecular interproton distance restraints ^a	37	
IIB ^{Mtl} intramolecular interproton distance restraints ^a	46	
IIA ^{Mtl} interfacial sidechain torsion angle restraints	36	
IIB ^{Mtl} interfacial sidechain torsion angle restraints	19	
R.m.s. deviation from interproton distance restraints (Å) ^b	0.012±0.031	0.009
R.m.s. deviation from sidechain torsion angle restraints (°) ^b	0.007±0.001	0.31
Measures of structural quality ^c		
Intermolecular repulsion energy (kcal·mol ⁻¹)	3.8±0.9	6.5
Intermolecular Lennard-Jones energy (kcal·mol ⁻¹)	-31.2±3.1	-36.7
Coordinate precision of the complex (Å) ^d		
Complete backbone (N, Cα, C', O) atoms	0.10	
Interfacial sidechain heavy atoms	0.65	

^aThe intramolecular NOE-derived interproton distance restraints relate only to interfacial sidechains.

^bNone of the structures exhibit interproton distance violations >0.3 Å or torsion angle violations >5°.

^cThe intermolecular repulsion energy is given by the value of the quartic van der Waals repulsion term calculated with a force constant of 4 kcal·mol⁻¹·Å⁻⁴ and a van der Waals radius scale factor of 0.78. The intermolecular Lennard-Jones van der Waals interaction energy is calculated using the CHARMM19/20 parameters and is *not* included in the target function used to calculate the structures.

^dDefined as the average r.m.s. difference between the final 270 simulated annealing structures and the mean coordinates. The value quoted for the complete backbone provides only a measure of the precision with which the orientation and translation of the two proteins in the complex have been determined, and does not take into account the backbone accuracy of the X-ray/NMR coordinates of IIA^{Mtl} and the NMR coordinates of phosphoIIB^{Mtl} used for conjoined rigid body/torsion angle dynamics docking. The accuracy of the X-ray coordinates of IIA^{Mtl} (including NMR refinement of the four variable regions comprising residues 540-543, 555-567, 580-585 and 593-599 on the basis of backbone RDCs) is likely to be around 0.3 Å judging from the crystallographic resolution and R-factor (10), as well as the dipolar coupling R-factors (this paper). The accuracy of the restrained regularized mean coordinates of phosphoIIB^{Mtl} can be estimated from the coordinate precision (0.3 Å) and the values of 14-16% for cross-validated N-H dipolar coupling R-factors in two alignment media (phage pfl and neutral polyacrylamide gel; ref. 21) which suggest that the coordinate accuracy is comparable to a 1.5-2 Å resolution crystal structure (19,45). The percentage residues in the most favored region of the Ramachandran map (51) is 92% for IIA^{Mtl} and 91% for phosphoIIB^{Mtl}.

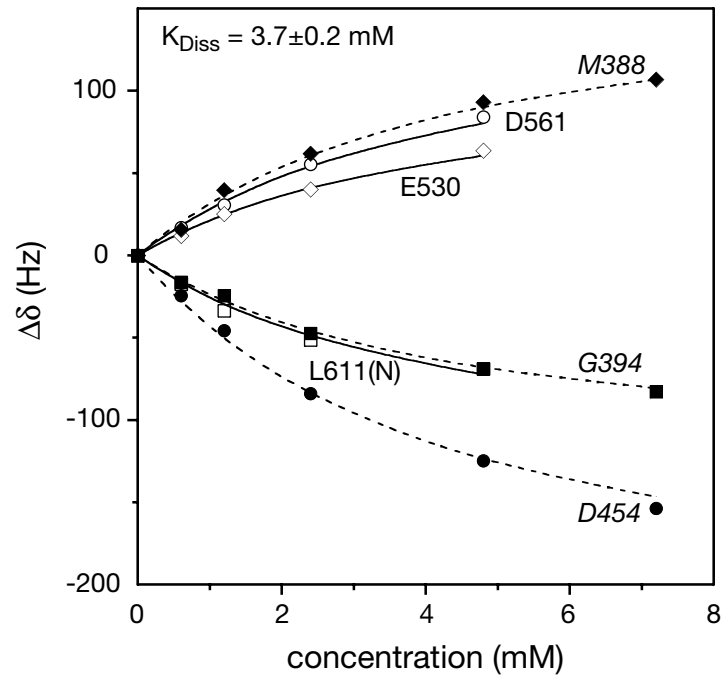


Fig. 1

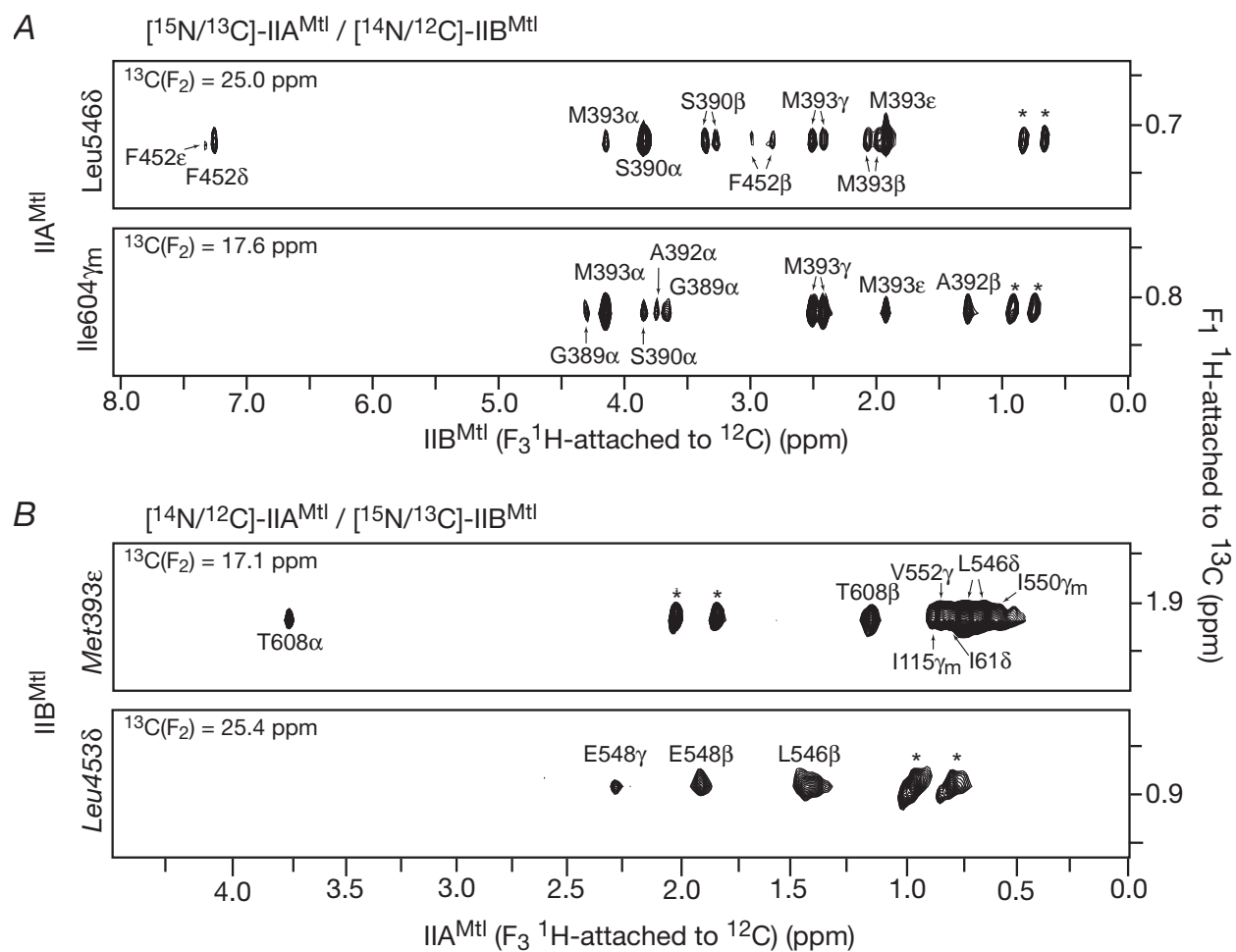


Fig. 2

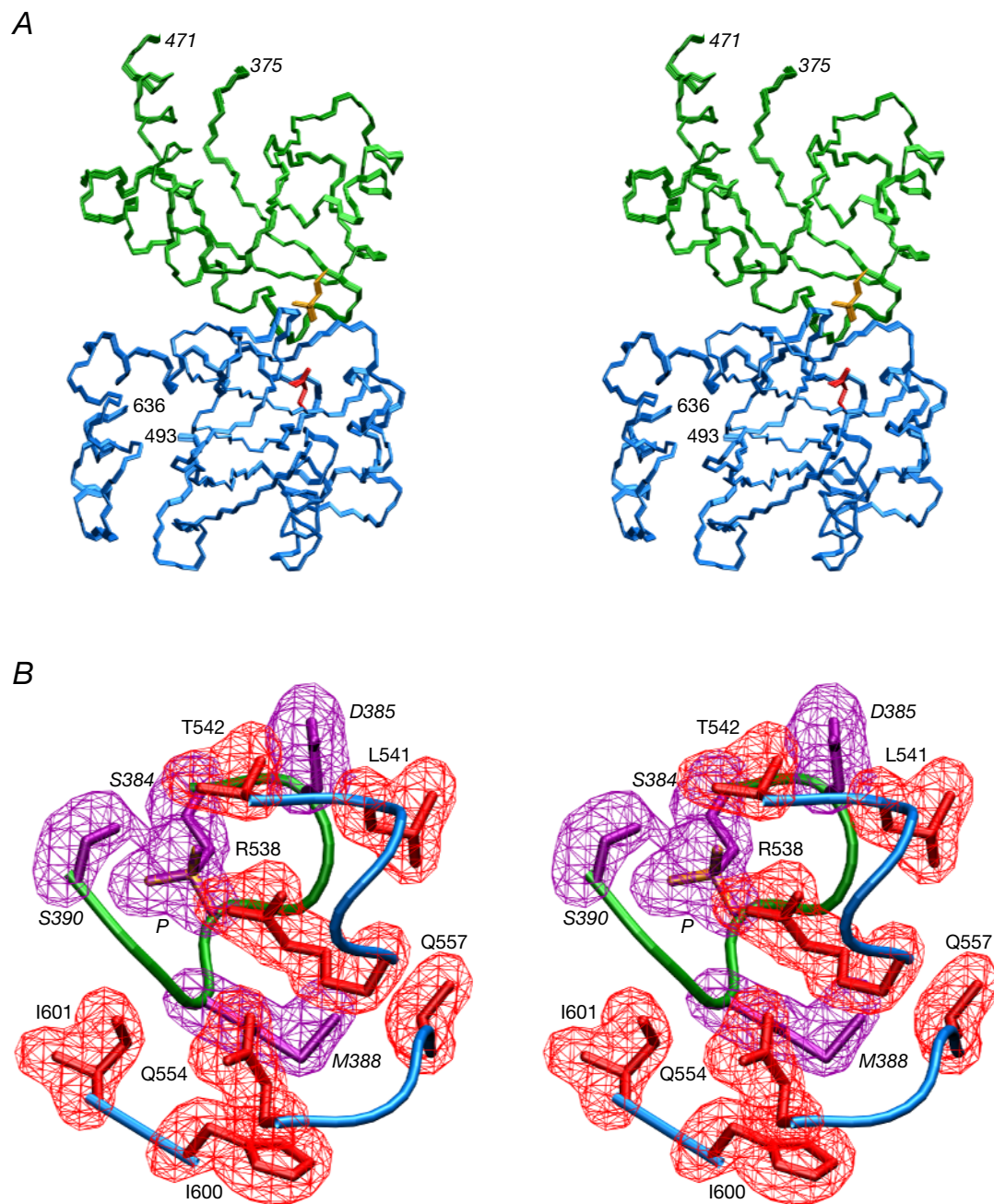


Fig. 3

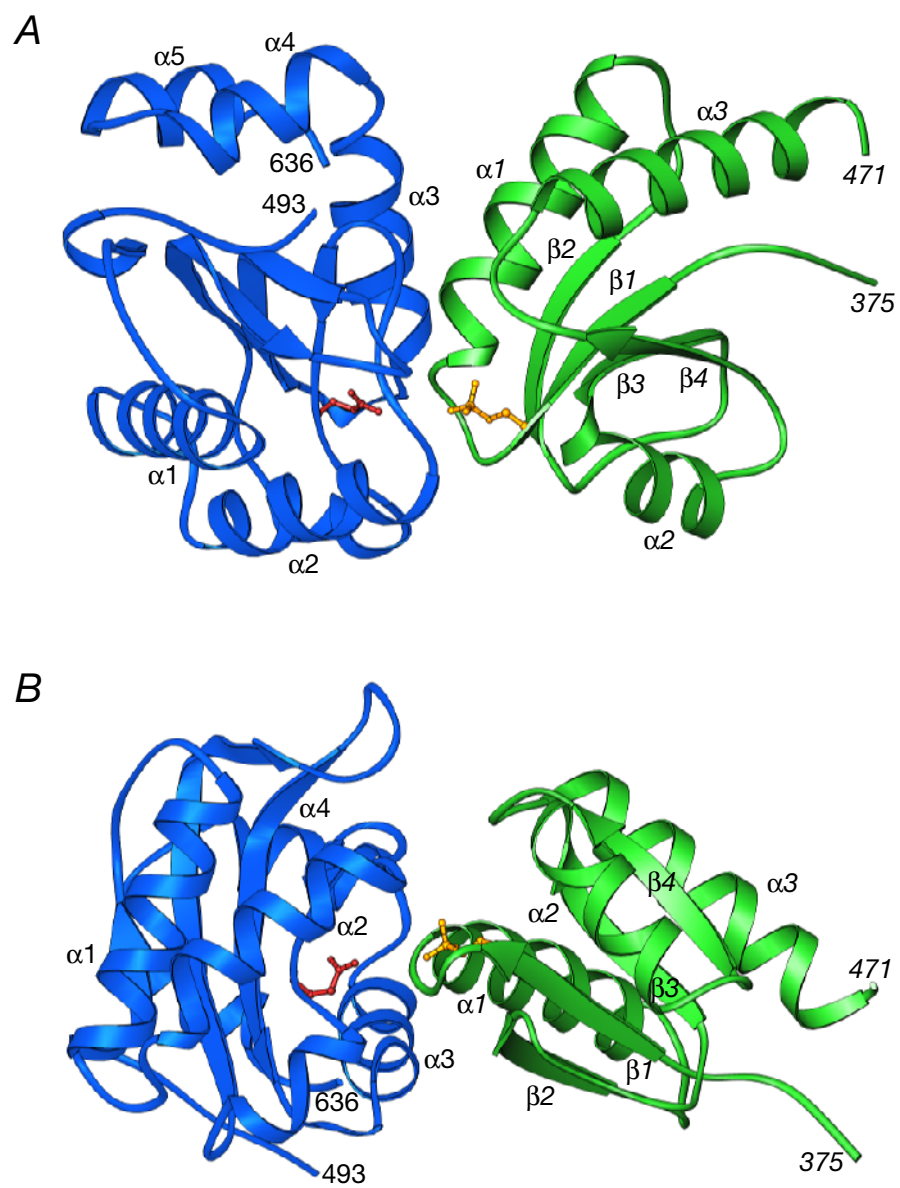
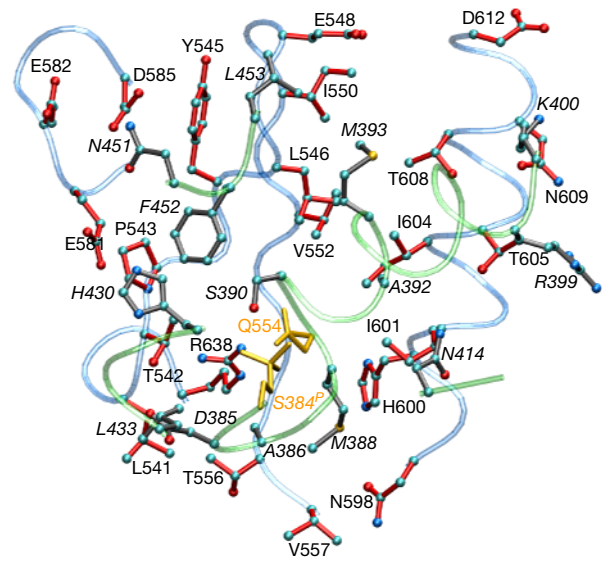
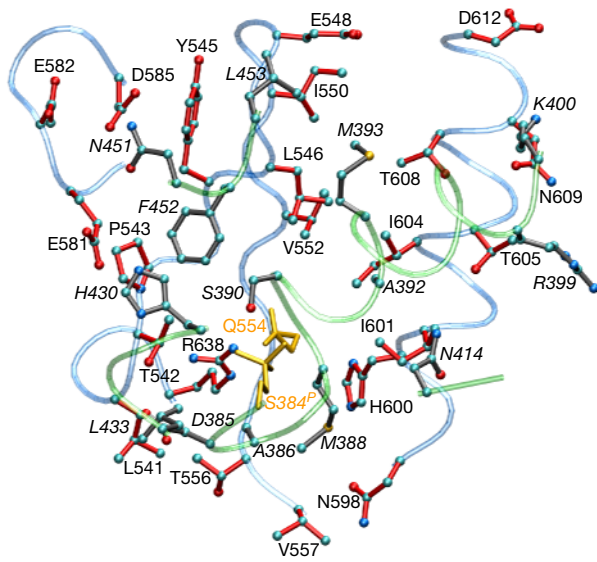
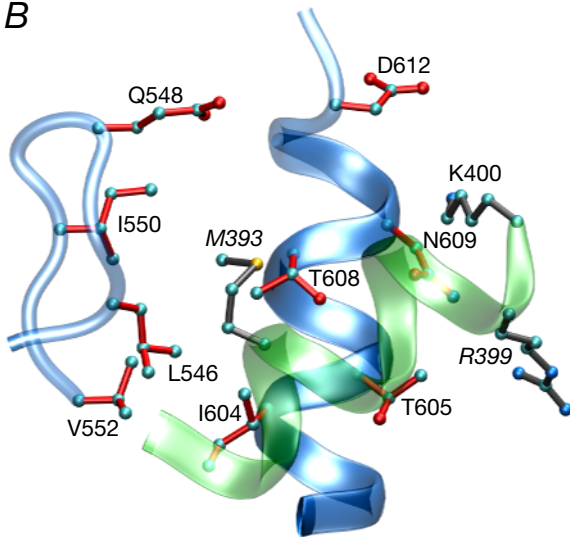


Fig. 4

A



B



C

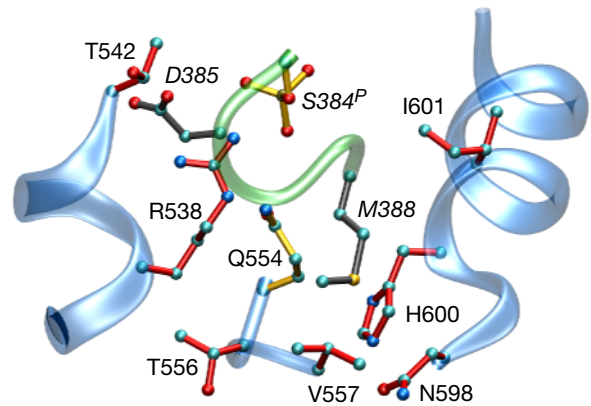


Fig. 5

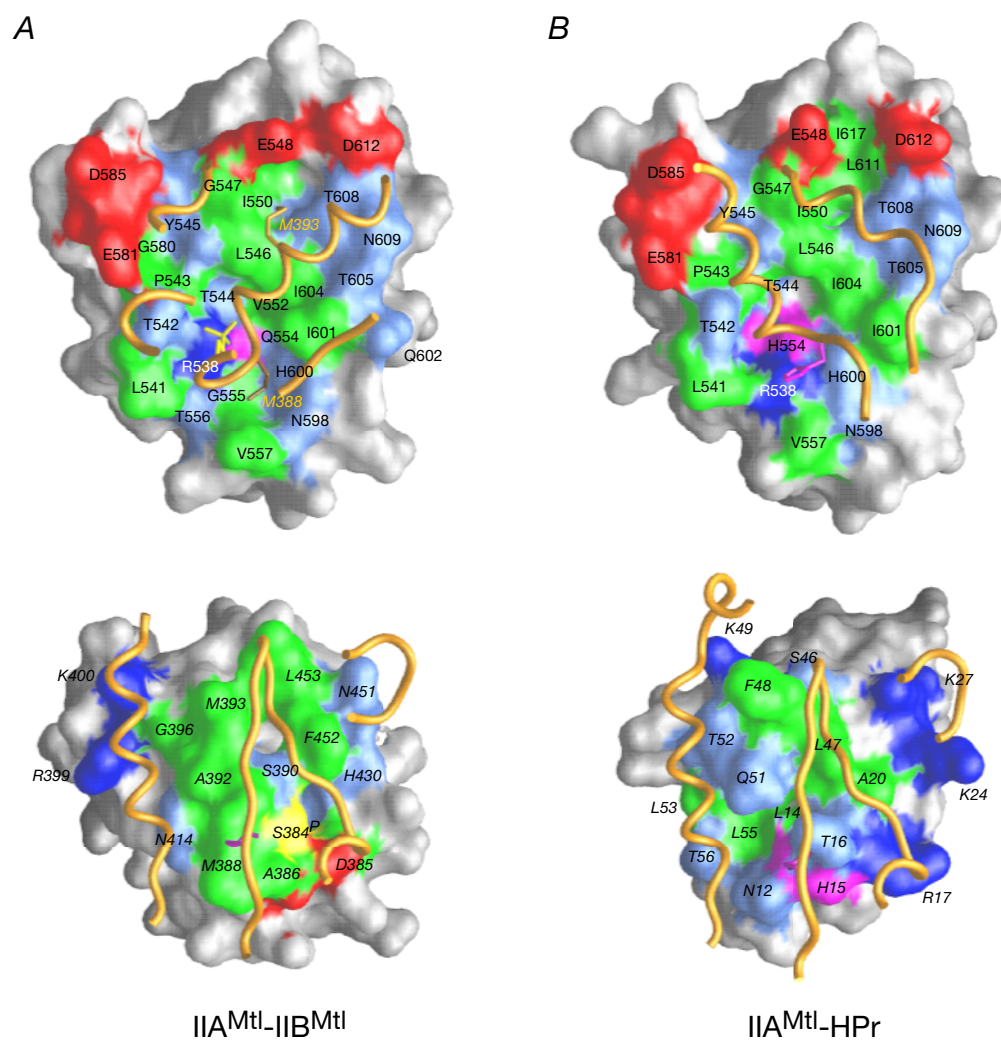


Fig. 6

Fig. 7

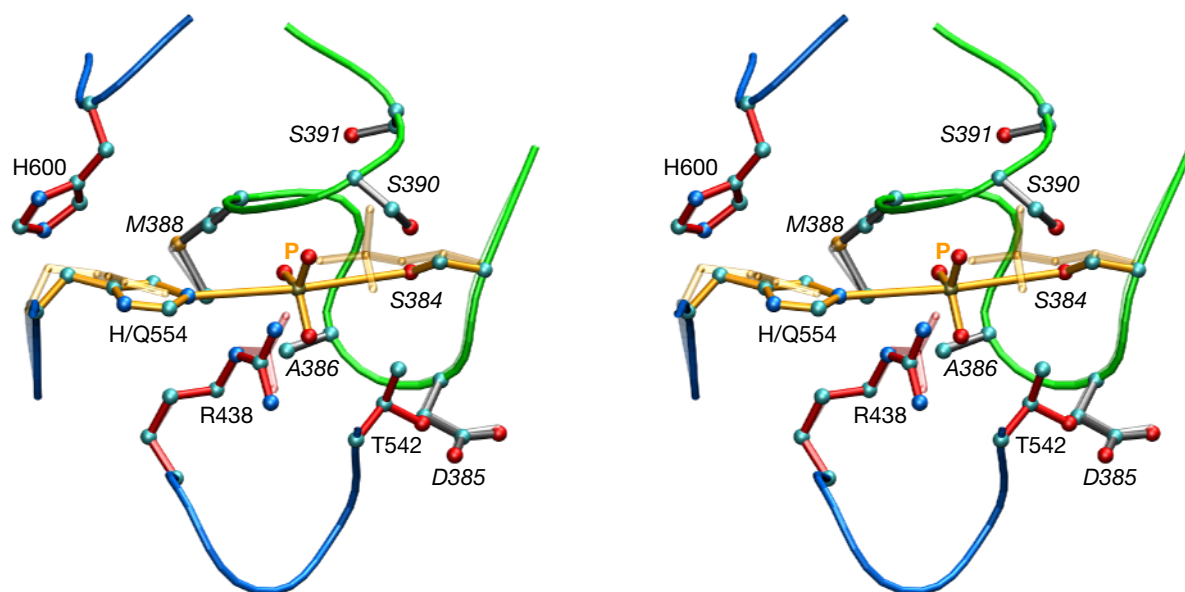


Fig. 8

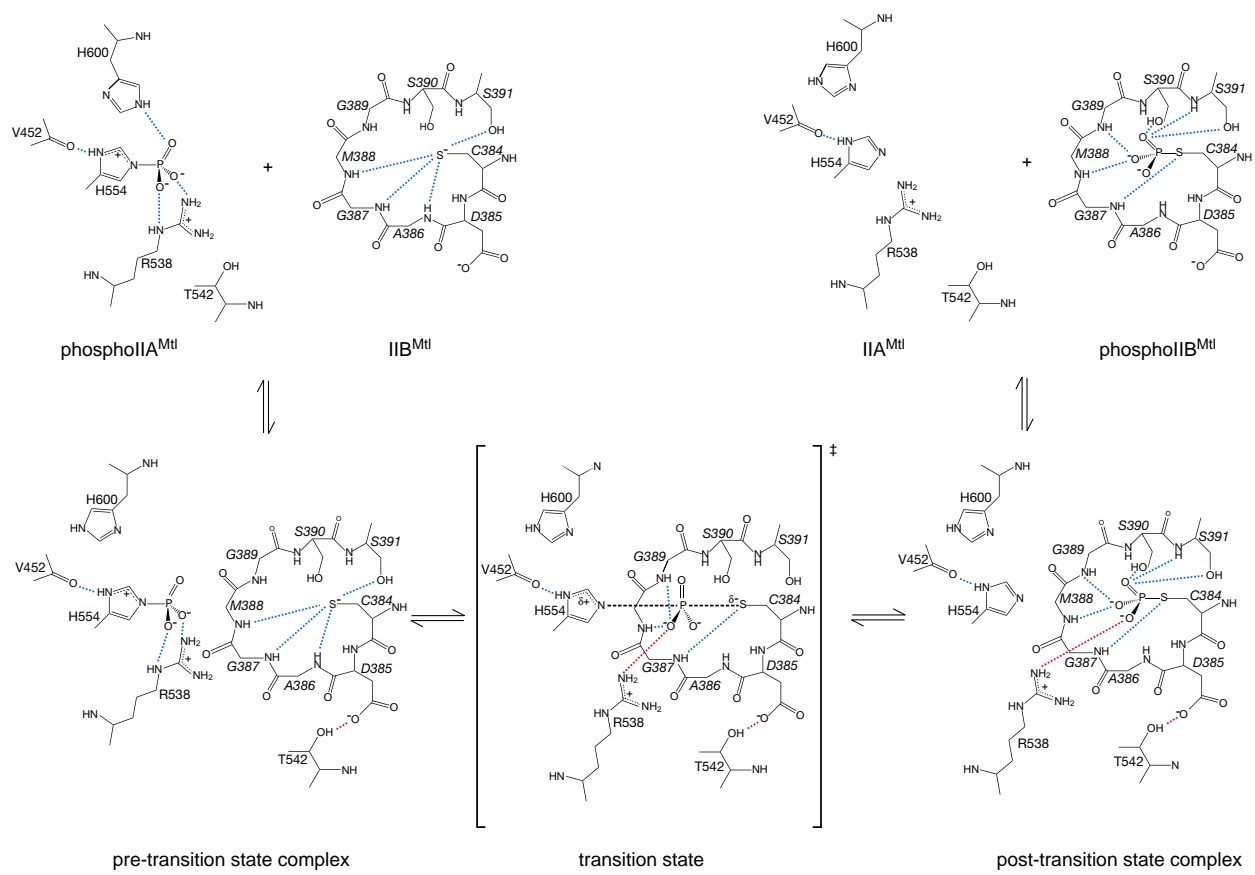


Fig. 9